

# Vets4Vets

- Peer support and empowerment groups for all Iraq-era veterans.
- Non-partisan, non-advocacy, no position on any issues.
- Projects in more than 40 communities nationwide (listed in pamphlet).
- Seven national Iraq-era Veteran Constituency Coordinators (also listed in pamphlet we distributed today).

# Workshops

- First National Vets4Vets Workshop, Miami, FL, December 9-11, 2005 (opening picture).
- First West Coast Regional Workshop, Los Angeles, April 7-9, 2006.
- First East Coast Regional Workshop, Washington, DC, April 21-23, 2006.
- Each workshop has a majority of Iraq-era veterans, but we do invite a few allies who are interest in helping get projects started. Most of those allies are Vietnam veterans like me (you can see a few white beards in the photo!)
- In our workshops, we split into support groups based on exposure to combat.
- Please see me after this session if you are interested in attending a workshop and/or helping us set up a Vets4Vets project in your community.
- If you cannot stay, please sign the Interest Sheet which is being passed around

# Nature of Vets4Vets Groups

- Inspired by the 12-step and support group movements, peer counseling (Reevaluation Counseling)—and the Rap Groups of the Vietnam era.
- Peer-led; there is a Leaders Manual on the website to guide a leader through the local meeting.
- Iraq-era veterans telling their stories.
- Uninterrupted, equally-timed turns (we do use kitchen timers!)
- Complete confidentiality (including not bringing up anyone's story without permission.)
- Encouraged to express feelings.
- Maintain and provide for support groups members, local contact information and relationships with the Veterans Administration, Vets Clinics, and other mental health agencies and providers (such as through the National Gulf War Resource Centers "Just One Solder" program.)

# Periodic Empowerment Workshops

- As part of their healing, Vets4Vets encourages Iraq-era veterans to get involved in the larger society.
- On issues of their own choosing—we ask each individual nominate issues and then split into groups to discuss and then decide on actions.
- Vets4Vets does not advocate any issue or organization, but tries to keep a local and national listing of all existing veterans' organizations across the political spectrum.
- Iraq-era vets are encouraged either to join in existing organizations or to start their own.
- A Leader's Manual for an Empowerment Workshop is also on the website...

# Funding

- Local groups are self supporting. Like our models, we seek to avoid the problems caused by having paid staff.
- Start-up funding for travel and lodging at workshops comes from a variety of individuals and foundations.
- Deep Democracy, the parent 501 (c)(3) is supported by a three-year grant. We are half-way through our first year, so we have three years to get this up and running.

# Demonstration of Vets4Vets Process

- You are all either veterans or allies to veterans. So we want you to get involved either with Vets4Vets or other organizations like those on this panel.
- So, in our planning meeting, we agreed to offer you a five-minute Vets4Vets uninterrupted listening turn before opening the session up for questions—especially since not all of you will get to speak in the question period..
- Please turn to someone near you.
- Please take a five-minute turn to speak without interruption on what might keep you from getting involved with Vets4Vets or doing something else for Iraq-era veterans.
- Please take some risk in sharing any feelings you have about this issue, this workshop, veterans, the war, whatever.
- I'll let you know at the end of five minutes so that you will each get a turn.
- If there are three of you, just give each other three minutes each.
- Please do try and not interrupt the person who is speaking.

# Debriefing

- So now you know what Vets4Vets is setting up around the country for Iraq-era veterans.
- Please feel free in the question and answer period to talk about what it was like to speak and be listened to without interruption.
- Now, I will turn the microphone back to our Moderator who will run our question and answer period.



# Vets4Vets Contact Information

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Local groups are listed in pamphlet.